NASH NEXT | <code>Spotlight</code> with <code>brett</code> <code>eldredge</code> NASH COUNTRY FOR LIFE | SEPTEMBER 14, 2015 LABOR **WIN A GEORGE** STRAIT AT&T STADIUM **CONCERT DVD** BEBY talks new single and MERLE, DOLLY what lies AND MORE ahead **GET THE JOB DONE** CONNIE ON OUR **TOP 40 HARDEST** strikes Opry gold after WORKING 50 years! **SONGS IN COUNTRY MUSIC** SCOTTY **McCREER** shows edgy side with new single "Southern Belle" SALUTE TO WORKING COUNTRYWEEKLY.COM MEN & WOMEN



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danpostboots.com

Jason Merritt/Academy of Country Music; Johnny by Norman Seeff/DKC PR

2000 SATURDAY, SEPT. 9



Repeat Performance

ALAN JACKSON returned to his past when he released his Under the Influence album in 1999. The entire collection was comprised of cover versions of the classic country songs that inspired Alan as a young man, including Gene Watson's "Farewell Party" and Jim Ed Brown's "Pop a Top," the first single from the album. Alan also covered a song first made famous by one of his all-time favorite vocalists, Don Williams, "It Must Be Love." He told Country Weekly in a 1999 interview, "I could do a whole album on Don Williams songs. I sang 'It Must Be Love' a lot back in the early '80s, before I had a record deal and was just playing little clubs and bars. It's stuck with me all these years." Don took "It Must Be Love" to No. 1 in 1979 and more than 20 years later, Alan repeated the feat with his version, which hit the top on Sept. 9, 2000. It was one of the rare instances where both the original and the remake reached No. 1.

2015

SEPT. 10: FAME WALK

If you're in Nashville the afternoon of Thursday, Sept. 10, you'll have a



chance to see GARTH **BROOKS** and TRISHA YEARWOOD as they receive their official induction into the Music City Walk of Fame at the Walk of Fame Park in downtown Music City. The Walk of Fame honors artists who have made significant contributions to Nashville's musical heritage.



SEPT. 11: BOY FROM ILLINOIS BRETT ELDREDGE fans eagerly await-

ing his sophomore album are in luck. The native of Paris, III., is releasing the new collection, appropriately titled Illinois, on Sept. 11. Illinois will include Brett's recent hit single, "Lose My Mind."

SEPT. 12:

CMT SALUTES CASH

CMT continues its series of original documentaries with Johnny Cash: American Rebel, airing

on Sept. 12, the 12th anniversary of his death. The film features interviews with Johnny's daughter

ROSANNE CASH, **SHERYL** CROW, **ERIC**

CHURCH, MERLE HAGGARD, RODNEY **CROWELL** and others.

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PLUS!



27 Avoiding the so-called "sophomore slump" was important for BRETT ELDREDGE as he put together his second album, *Illinois*, set for release on Sept. 11. Brett talks about the personal side of his new album, songwriting and getting back to his R&B roots.



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1edia; Brett by Jim Wright Neill/EB Media; Brett cour

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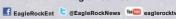
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MIRANDA LAMBERT, AND MARTINA McBRIDE

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Dear Readers,

The U.S. Department of Labor explains that Labor Day, the first Monday in September, "is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers." Created by the labor movement, the annual holiday is our opportunity to honor the many and significant contributions of working people whose efforts helped build this country into what it is today. So in honor of all who contribute to the prosperity of this country, we here

at Nash Country Weekly got to work and put our heads together to figure out 40 (get it, 40-hour workweek?) of the hardest-working country songs that pay tribute to our men and women workers. Who better to kick off a workers' tribute than George Strait, a singer who honors the working class with songs like "Amarillo by Morning" and "Shiftwork." So while you are enjoying your muchdeserved day off for doing good work, browse through our selection of 40 great songs from your favorite country acts and have a very happy Labor Day.

In the Nash Next section, we talk with Brett Eldredge, who sat down with senior writer Bob Paxman to talk about his latest project, Illinois. The country singer gets candid about his whirlwind year, the main influences on his career, heartbreak and falling in love.

Don't miss next week's issue, on stands Sept. 14, as we bring you our fall preview of all the noteworthy happenings in country music this season—from Blake Shelton on *The Voice* and Luke Bryan's Farm Tour to the CMA Awards and Carrie Underwood's new album.

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK!

LISA KONICKI, EDITOR IN CHIEF

FROM THE READER 🥯







Shoot us an email, a comment or a tweet and let us know what you think!

Letters, Nash Country Weekly, 506 2nd. Ave. South, Suite 200, Nashville, TN 37210

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HEARTBROKE AND THEN SOME

My husband and I, along with so many other people, were so heartbroken to hear of Blake & Miranda's divorce. I truly thought when Miranda said that "divorce is not an option" that they would be married forever. I admired her tremendously for that, too.

However, no one knows why they divorced except the two of them. I personally know it's not easy to go through a divorce, and doing so in the public eye must be a terrible experience. My husband and I took a cross-country trip this summer and we made a detour to Tishomingo and stayed in the Ladysmith. What a beautiful B&B. We hope to go back there again one day! We had no idea that the same day we were there, July 6, Blake was filing the divorce papers. I enjoyed your article on both of them and pray they will continue to have good careers as we love them both. I hope the media will lose interest in all the stories they make up and let them grieve their loss in their own way.

COLLEEN RICHARDSON Blairsville, Ga.

TWITTER

Thank you @countryweekly for being so super awesome! What a fun hang today! #THATSwhatimtalkingabout.

STEPHANIE QUAYLE | @StephanieQuayle

Great POSITIVE article about Blake and Miranda, @countryweekly. Refreshing to see a mag choose to find good rather than to speculate. #win ANN | @lilannie11

Thank you @countryweekly for the awesome feature of @BrantleyGilbert! He's a genuinely good person. #BGNation.

MARLA KECK | @MarlaKeck

Happy just bought @countryweekly and it has my favorites in it @ScottyMcCreery and @DanAndShay.

MICHELLE WAKEFIELD | @mlwake22

BADA\$\$ Photo Of @janson_chris In @countryweekly.

DIGITAL ZAPPER | @digitalzapper

FACEBOOK

Still can't believe she's [Lynn Anderson] gone! Such a vibrant and great entertainer. Who would have guessed her life would be cut short the way it was. Gone, but certainly not forgotten. The beautiful young singer matured into one of country music's greatest. I'll see you later, Lynn, in a place where the music never stops.

CAROL STALEY LAPOLLA

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THE COUNTRY

A SWEET TASTE OF ALL THINGS COUNTRY

Opening Act



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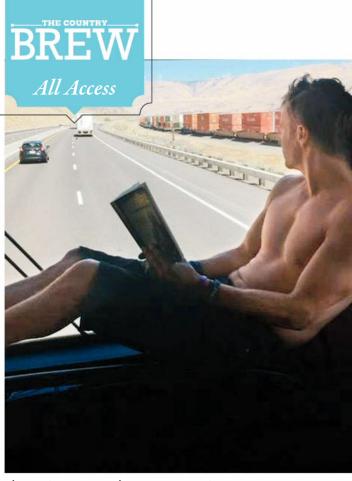
For four nights, Nashville will celebrate all that is good in the world of roots music during the Americana Music Festival Sept. 16-19. A dozen or so Music City locales will host more than 160 live performances, including the Mavericks, Lee Ann Womack and Ray Wylie Hubbard. The festival's marquee event, the Americana Honors & Awards Show, will return to the historic Ryman Auditorium on Sept. 16. Hosted by JIM LAUDERDALE and backed by the BUDDY MILLER-led All Star Band, the Awards Show will feature performances from a who's who of stars, including Don Henley, Ricky Skaggs and Los Lobos, among many others.



(Above) PEEK-A-BOO Craig Campbell knows something you don't know about the "Tomorrow Tonight" video, probably because he was there; (below) WARM FIZZIES Randy Houser and wife Tatiana Starzynski have their relationship fortune accurately read by a can of Coke Zero.











(Clockwise from above) WINDOW SEAT Dierks Bentley would rather fly a plane, but he still finds ways to pass the time on the bus; HOKEY OKIES The Swon Brothers and Blake Shelton engage in curious Oklahoma native rituals; HANGING WITH 10 Georgia native Billy Currington was feeling pretty cheerful when he met MLB great Chipper Jones during a Braves game at Turner Field in Atlanta; HAIRY SITUA-TION Don't tell the guys on Animal Planet's Finding Bigfoot, but the sasquatch is apparently a big Trace Adkins fan.







(Above) PORK BARREL Calm your frayed nerves with this adorable photo of Josh Kelley and his adorable pet pig with the adorable name Hamlet.



(Above) SPIT SHINE Carrie Underwood gets a quick and dirty post-workout bath from Penny; THIS JUST IN Canadian Lindsay Ell tries her hand at being a news anchor and decides that she'd rather just shred wicked guitar, thank you very much.











low) one group is determined to send a friend to her wedding in style.



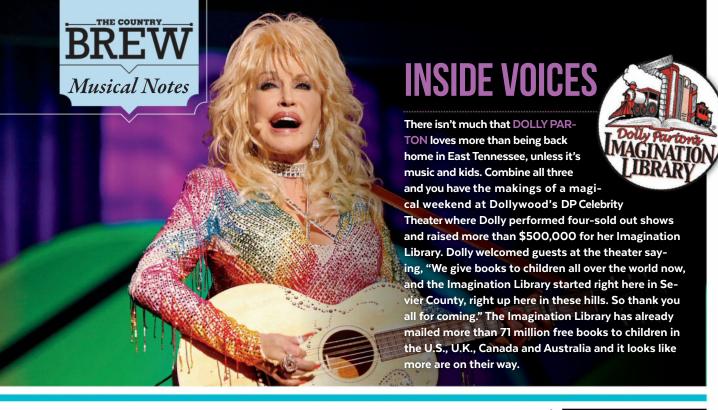






September 14, 2015 • NASH Country Weekly 13





HEADLINING HOUSER

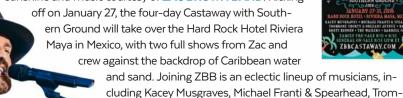
A big voice needs a big venue. And after proving he has the pipes to fill an arena on Luke Bryan's Kick Up The Dust Tour, RANDY HOUSER has announced he'll headline his own run of arena

shows. The We Went Tour, named after his newest single, will kick off November 20. "We had a blast touring with Luke this summer, and it's been an incredible opportunity to play for some people we might not have played to before," says Randy. "We're really looking forward to building our show this fall, playing the arenas and getting to play some new music." Frankie Ballard and Craig Campbell will join Randy for the tour, which currently includes stops in Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Oklahoma and Wisconsin. Additional shows are expected to be added in coming



JUMP RIGHT IN

Don't pack away the swimsuit just yet. By the time winter ensnares you in its cold, unforgiving claws, you'll have a chance to make your escape to sunshine and music courtesy of ZAC BROWN BAND. Kicking





bone Shorty & Orleans Avenue, Dawes, Brett Dennen, The Wailers and Darrell Scott. Tickets are on sale now. For more info, check out zbbcastaway.com.

BIRTHDAYS

SEPT. 9, 1965 CHARLES "CHIP" ESTEN of Nashville

SEPT. 9, 1975 JOEY MARTIN FEEK of Joey+Rory

SEPT. 9, 1991 HUNTER HAYES

SEPT. 10, 1986 ASHLEY MONROE

SEPT. 11, 1981 CHARLES KELLEY of Lady Antebellum

SEPT. 12. 1974 JENNIFER NETTLES

SEPT. 12, 1993 KELSEA BALLERINI

SEPT. 13, 1973 AARON BENWARD of Blue County

SEPT. 13, 1975 JOE DON ROONEY of Rascal Flatts





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THREE FOR THREE



If one No. 1 single is worth a celebration, three No. 1 singles are worth an extravaganza, and that's exactly what took place when JASON ALDEAN, his Broken Bow record label team and the songwriters and publishers for Jason's three most recent chart toppers—"Burnin' It Down," "Just Gettin' Started," and "Tonight Looks Good on You"-came together for one ginormous event. Nashville's City Winery provided three separate backdrops for the soiree, giving each song and its writers and publishers their own unique celebration. Prior to the presentation of plagues, Jason told the media, "Obviously having a No. 1, just one of them, is neat, but these days with

everybody involved, with us being on the road and FGL and those guys being on the road, it's kind of hard to get everybody in the same place. I think we were planning on a couple, one to celebrate two of them, and then the third went No. 1, so we figured we'd celebrate them all in one day."

Congratulations to "Burnin' It Down" writers Chris Tompkins, Rodney Clawson and Florida Georgia Line's Brian Kelley and Tyler Hubbard; "Just Getting' Started" writers Rhett Akins, Ashley Gorley and Chris DeStefano; and to the writers of "Tonight Looks Good on You," Rhett, Ashley and Dallas Davidson.



(From left) Chris Tompkins, Tyler Hubbard, Jason, Brian Kelley and Rodney Clawson



(From left) Ashley Gorley, Dallas Davidson, Jason and Rhett Akins



(From left) Chris DeStefano, Jason, Ashley Gorley and Rhett Akins

CHILL OUT YETI coolers may keep your beer ice-cold, but they are the hottest item in country music right now. The chic coolers are getting namedropped in songs by some of country's coolest chaps. See if you can match the five Yeti lyrics with the artist and their song.







Luke Bryan "SHE GETS ME HIGH"







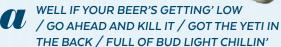
Lee Brice "NO BETTER THAN THIS"



Chris Janson "BUY ME A BOAT"



B and the Moonshine Band











J-C: 5-D: 2-V: 4-E: 2-B



The Oak Ridge Boys were recently elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame and now they've garnered another honor to add to their mantels. The quartet of Duane Allen, Joe Bonsall, Richard Sterban and William Lee Golden received the Bob Hope Award for Excellence in Entertainment by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, recognizing their work with the American Legion on Aug. 8 at the Nashville Salutes Gala. Last September, the Oaks joined forces with the American Legion to help raise awareness and support for better treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder among U.S. service personnel.

RHINESTONE DVD

The acclaimed, inspiring documentary, Glen Campbell: I'll Be Me, is heading to DVD on Tuesday, Sept. 1. The film profiles Country Music Hall of Fame member GLEN CAMPBELL and his battle with Alzheimer's, filmed during his final American tour in 2011 and 2012. Directed by actor James Keach, the documentary takes an unflinching look at Alzheimer's but is ultimately a story of triumph. Glen's wife Kim and their children Ashley, Cal and Shannon appear throughout



the film, which also features cameo appearances by Keith Urban, Paul McCartney, Blake Shelton, Bruce Springsteen and other Glen admirers.



Barrels of Fun

People getting drunk on a plane bound for Las Vegas will soon have a new bar where they can maintain the buzz. DIERKS BENTLEY is planning to open the fourth installment of his Whiskey Row franchise on the Sin City Strip in July 2016. Dierks already has two Whiskey Row locations in Arizona, as well as one currently under construction in Chicago.

YOUR STYLE YOU WENT TO COUNTRYWEEKLY.COM Confessions WOMEN'S POLL

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14% KELSEA BALLERINI



33% REBA MCENTI



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Three candle sculptures sparkle with glitter and flicker with artificial flames.

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AND VOTED. **HERE ARE** THE RESULTS.

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LOAFER 11%





24%

SNEAKER



WHAT TYPE OF UNderwear **DO YOU PREFER TO WEAR?**

29%..... .. BRIEFS 19%.....BOXERS 4%......COMMANDO



fashion/style?

YES

SOMEWHAT

NO

59%

CLEAN SHAVEN

STUBBLE

WHAT







STRAIGHT 9%

WHICH MALE COUNTRY STAR'S LOOK DO YOU WANT TO EMULATE?

29% TIM McGRAW

23% GEORGE STRAIT

8% SAM HUNT

7% BRANTLEY GILBERT

33% KIP MOORE



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Album



Alabama Southern Drawl BMG



As the biggest selling country group of all time, Alabama's contributions to country music and lasting influence are unimpeachable. They don't have anything left to prove. Which is precisely why it's so perplexing to hear them trying to do that on their new album, Southern Drawl. The title track is a lumbering, riff-heavy spiel (with some canned crowd noise) about the South being an awesome place, and it may well have been a rejected Jason Aldean tune. The first single, "Wasn't Through Lovin' You Yet," is compositionally stronger but still manages

to be a ringer for Lee Brice's "Hard to Love." The ballads and softer tunes like the meditative "This Ain't Just a Song" and "Come Find Me" have some great moments, and Randy, Jeff and Teddy are in fine voice throughout. But occasionally the slow offerings, like "As Long As There's Love" and "It's About Time" go off the deep end into seriously ham-fisted territory. For pure, escapist fun, "Footstompin' Music"with its "Play that Funky Music" cadences-and the raucous "Hillbilly Wins the

Lotto Money" are plenty enjoyable. What makes this album disappointing is not so much that Alabama hasn't recaptured the crowdpleasing magic of "Dixieland Delight" or "Mountain Music," but that they're trying to chase the trends instead of just making music for its own sake.

JON FREEMAN

LONG STORY SHORT: Unlikely to convert the nonbelievers, Southern Drawl is for Alabama fans who love unconditionally.

THE NCW *JUKEBOX*

Essential songs from George Strait that didn't go No. 1.

NO. 2

"Wrapped" "True" "Go On" "Here for a Good Time"

NO. 3

"Adalida" "So Much Like My Dad" "I Gotta Get to You"

NO. 4

"Amarillo by Morning" "You'll Be There" "What Do You Say to That"

NO. 5

"The Cowboy Rides Awav" "Gone as a Girl Can Get" "I Know She Still Loves Me"

NO. 6

"Marina del Rey" "Unwound" "When Did You Stop Loving Me"

NO. 7

"Lead On" "Troubadour" "Give It All We Got Tonight"

NO. 8

"Lovebug" "Overnight Success"

LOOK FOR THIS



Singles

The Band Perry

"Live Forever" REPUBLIC NASHVILLE

C+



The Band Perry has come pop, pop, popping out of the chute with their anthemic lead single, "Live Forever," from their upcoming third album.

The new tune is a calculated move across genre lines that enlists the talents of cowriter/co-producer, RedOne, who has worked with the likes of Lady Gaga ("Poker Face," "Bad Romance") and Nicki Minaj ("Starship"), among other pop heavyweights. While country purists will cry foul on its überglossy production, layered backing vocals and go-go-Gadget hook of Go, go crazy, go, go, go crazy / We're gonna live, we're gonna live forever, the song's veiled shortcoming is its nebulous-at-best, say-nothing lyrics. However, Kimberly Perry's vocals manage to salvage it into a middling song that is sure to be a sing-along at TBP's live shows.

JIM CASEY

Lucy Angel

"Crazy Too" NEW REVOLUTION/G-FORCE



Mother-daughter trio Lucy Angel is big on personality. The woman in the Anderton family's latest single, "Crazy Too," is address-

ing her man about his ex, who has come completely unhinged and started harassing them. Surprisingly, she understands: he's shady and it's making her frantically search for signs that he's fooling around. The Beatles-esque lead guitar figure is nice, but the dry production sounds a decade late. Fortunately, they've got charm to spare and a tune that should rally anyone who's ever not trusted a mate.

JON FREEMAN

Jason Aldean

"Gonna Know We Were Here" **BROKEN BOW RECORDS**

B+



The thing I love about Jason Aldean is that he's never afraid to swim against the current. He's also never afraid to actually

sing. And in his newest single, "Gonna Know We Were Here," he does both of those things, releasing a meaty tune in a field of lighthearted summer fare that showcases Jason's impressive vocal range. I'm uncertain as to whether songwriters Brett Beavers and Brett James were writing specifically for Jason, but as far as theme and arrangement go, it doesn't deviate uncomfortably far from songs he has released in the recent past. One could argue, though, that it is this type of consistency that lends itself to his successful evolution in the music business.

TAMMY RAGUSA







MOORE

HERE'S A GRILLING RECIPE FROM JUSTIN MOORE THAT WILL LEAVE FOLKS BEG-GING FOR SECONDS.

We typically think of Labor Day, which we celebrate this year on Sept. 7, as the almost-official end of summer. But that doesn't mean that grilling season is over. Check out this recipe from Justin Moore for BBQ shrimp, which the "Point at You" singer prepared for the Big Green Egg grill company, that's sure to add some spicy variety to your next cookout.

BOB PAXMAN

JUSTIN MOORE'S BBQ SHRIMP

1 pound peeled and deveined shrimp Cajun dry seasoning

Olive oil

Fresh chopped garlic

Freshly ground pepper

Kosher salt

Red pepper flakes

("The amounts of each depend on your taste," Justin says. "I like mine spicy, so I use a fair amount of Cajun spice and pepper flakes.")

HEAT the Big Green Egg grill to 400-450°. In a bowl, **MIX** the shrimp with all ingredients. Cover each shrimp with a small amount of olive oil. COOK 3 or 4 minutes per side, using skewers for cooking. Then close all vents and cook for 2 more minutes for a nice smoke flavor.

SERVE over pasta or as an appetizer with toasted French bread.



FIRST CAR.

'69 Coronet 440.

FIRST STREET YOU LIVED ON.

County Road 804.

FIRST TATTOO.

"He who has the Son has life," from the Book of John on my right arm.

FIRST DRINK.

Similac formula.

FIRST CONCERT.

Lynyrd Skynyrd and ZZ Top.

FIRST MUSIC TEACHER.

Mrs. Woods, and she told me I was stupid because I was smarter than all the other kids when we had to learn the recorder when we were in elementary school. I could just hear it and play it without reading notes. That's how I still do music. But I'll never forget it. My dad went in there, and she never said that again. I'll put it that way. My high school music teacher then flunked me. I never did good in music in school because I couldn't read the notes, but I could outplay anybody.

FIRST KISS.

I really don't remember any other one before my wife. I didn't really run around with chicks when I was younger. I was always on four-wheelers and working. The first kiss with my wife had to have been at her house right at the beginning of our dating relationship.

FIRST TIME YOU HEARD YOURSELF ON THE RADIO.

Big 98 in Nashville. I freaked out!

FIRST DATE.

I don't remember, to be honest with you. I do remember the first date with my wife. We went to Sol Restaurant, a Mexican restaurant in downtown Franklin.

FIRST SONG YOU EVER LEARNED **HOW TO PLAY.**

"Keep Your Hands to Yourself" by the Georgia Satellites.

CAN YOU STILL PLAY IT?

Yes.

FIRST TIME YOU LEFT HOME.

When I was 10. We went to Shelbyville, Tennessee.



5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT CRAIG CAMPBELL

With his lead single, "TOMORROW TONIGHT," from his upcoming third studio album climbing the charts, we sat down with Craig Campbell to chat about the great unknowns.

- The first guitar I ever bought myself was a Takamine Santa Fe LTD 1997. I named it Shara after my late sister.
- My dream vacation is Fiji. I would stay in a hut built over the water.
- My daddy used to call me "Monkey" when I was a kid. I have no idea why.
- I have owned 11 different vehicles, not counting the ones my wife has owned.
- My first band was named Out of the Blue because none of us could think of a good band name.





STATEOFTHEAS

BRETT ELDREDGE WAVES OFF ANY NOTION OF A "SOPHOMORE SLUMP" AS HE BRANCHES OUT ON HIS NEW ALBUM, ILLINOIS.

BY BOB PAXMAN

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT





(Clockwise from top left) Brett offers a toast to his "Mean to Me" co-writers at an industry party; with dad Chris (left), mom Robin and brother Brice, who have always been in Brett's corner; proudly showing off the rainbow trout he recently caught; posing with his tour buddy (and guest vocalist on his new album) Thomas Rhett at the 2015 CMT Music Awards at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville.





As a kid growing up in tiny Paris, Ill., Brett Eldredge would envision his name in lights on a marquee sign. A youthful, naive pipe dream? Some would say so. But as the inspirational speakers love to exhort, "if you can dream it, you can do it." And you'd have to agree that Brett has followed up on the dream.

During the past year alone, Brett has filled up a once-empty mantel with more hardware than Microsoft. Among those achievements: Brett scored his third career No. 1, "Mean to Me," and landed a spot on Darius Rucker's Southern Style Tour. He's also the defending Country Music Association New Artist of the Year titleholder. In October, Brett and his buddy-and co-star in Zaxby's TV commercials—Thomas Rhett, will coheadline the annual CMT On Tour. a series that has proved a veritable launching pad for emerging acts.

On this particular night in Nashville, Brett is living yet one more episode of the unfolding dream. He's perched inside a dressing room at Marathon Music Works to tape a segment of the popular PBS series Front and Center, an intimate showcase for songwriter/artists. That's a heady enough enterprise for the 29-year-old, but here's what truly has him gushing—he's being paired for a couple songs with one of his singing idols, Ronnie Dunn.

"He is my main influence in all of music," Brett says, seated on a couch while trying to toss paper wads into a distant wastebasket (part of his antsy nature, he assures). "I get to sing

one of my favorite Brooks & Dunn songs, 'Believe,' with Ronnie. One of the reasons I got into country music was Brooks & Dunn, and all my life I grew up listening to Ronnie Dunn and trying to sing like him. And for this show, he's singing [Brett's song] 'One Mississippi' with me, and that's an honor I'll never forget."

On Sept. 11, Brett will see his name on another important piece of product, his second career album, *Illinois*. Again, this is the result of a youthful vision, at least in terms of the title. "I always wanted to have an album called *Illinois*, even as a kid," Brett explains with a satisfied smile. "It has a great ring to it and, of course, I'm from there. It is something I envisioned a long time ago."

While somewhat pondering who





(Clockwise from top) Brett and Darius Rucker rocked out a couple duets at Darius' Nashville fundraiser this past summer; Brett calls Ronnie Dunn one of his musical heroes; Little Brett (left), a Chicago Cubs fan, even in his early days; Brett offers a bite of salad to Thomas Rhett in their commercial for Zaxby's. "We had a blast the entire time doing that," Brett says. (Opposite) Brett accepts his CMA New Artist of the Year award.







Brett might envision for the 2016 Super Bowl (for amusement purposes only), NASH Country Weekly brings up a more critical point. Mainly, was he concerned about the so-called "sophomore slump" that has plagued many a young artist? While he may not have obsessed over this career hurdle. Brett will concede that he was aware of it. There was a certain determination to grow and evolve with Illinois, mainly in terms of songwriting and choice of material.

"You always have to show improvement," Brett says. "I wanted to try out some different things for this album. You don't want that 'sophomore slump' or whatever they want to call it."

So, how to avoid it? Featuring more personal material seemed a logical step. "People want to get to know an

artist," Brett accurately surmises. "They know your songs, but they want to know you, too. I think identity is so important if you want to have a longterm career." Spoken like a true marketing executive, but he is nonetheless straight on the money. Without some sort of relatable identity, your career will come to a halt faster than an Ashley Madison subscriber's marriage.

For Brett's new album, it doesn't get more personal than the title track. "It is about who I am," Brett says, "but it's also a song about roots. You could be from anywhere and relate to this." Brett wrote the wistful anthem with songwriting notables Tom Douglas, an expert at penning autobiographical tunes (Miranda Lambert's "The House That Built Me" is his masterwork), and Brad Crisler.

But this proved no ordinary co-write, as Brett proceeds to explain.

"I called Tom and asked him if he would like to meet me in my hometown, Paris, like the next day," Brett recalls with an engaging laugh. "It's about a four-and-a-half hour drive from Nashville. It was like a research trip. I wanted him to see my hometown and he got to see everything that made me who I am. He and I ate at the same restaurants that I always go to and we went to the same lake where I'd go when I was growing up. We all got together to write the song back in Nashville and Brad laid down this great piano part and a beautiful melody."

From Brett's own account, his boyhood was practically Rockwellian in its simplicity. He wasn't the oddball



who suffered from some societal angst, with art as his only means of expression. Brett made friends easily, loved watersports and baseball (his favorite team is the Chicago Cubs, a testament to his virtues of patience and loyalty) and had his share of girlfriends along the way.

"I had a pretty normal childhood," Brett says, smiling. "It was about as perfect as you can imagine. I was very fortunate to have great parents. They supported me in everything I did. My family has been a huge part of this ride." Indeed, when Brett started playing local gigs, his mom, Robin, bought a book on sound mixing and actually ran the soundboard for him. Years later. when Brett's label threw a release party for his 2013 debut album, Bring You Back. Robin baked the brownies that

graced the party's buffet table.

Also on the personal side is "Wanna Be That Song," a romantic outing based on real-life experience. "I got the idea for that when I heard that people were getting married to 'Mean to Me,' or couples saying that it was their song," Brett notes with a grin. "The focus was I want to be that song that made you fall in love. But there are some heartbreak songs on here, too, like 'Lose It All,' which I wrote with Bill Anderson and Brad Crisler. That came from personal experience also. It's rough at the time," Brad adds before letting go a laugh, "but sometimes you can get a good song out of it."

Brett can tell you about hard times on the career level as well. When he first moved to Nashville. Brett played every gig he could manage to land, often for an audience that could barely be described as a "crowd." But he realized that those were dues that had to be paid.

"I can remember playing for, like, ten people at a show," he says. "I know there was one show where there were actually two people in the audience. But those were special times, too. You learn from them. Every step matters."

Those steps have led to the point in his career where folks know his name and, just as important, his songs. "It's so cool to see people gravitate toward your music and what you do," Brett says. "I remember when no one knew any songs of mine and now you see them lip-synching to even an album cut. That's the most amazing thing."

Well, seeing your name in lights isn't bad, either.

Allthe MORID'S a Stage

CLARE DUNN JUST MAY BE COUNTRY'S MOST UNIQUE PERFORMER.

BY JON FREEMAN

∀eeing Clare Dunn perform can be a confounding experience for first-timers. She accents her singing with liquid dance moves: hips rotating, shoulders popping with precision and arms carving graceful arcs from the air. At the same time, she expertly peels off impressive melodic leads on her electric guitar, navigating her band through the curves of each song.

It's a singular type of artistic expression in country music that garners plenty of "how does she do that?" reactions. And her music, like the sexy single "Move On"—her first release as a signee to MCA Nashville—reflects

a musical worldview that combines her rural Colorado farm upbringing with the pop and country she heard growing up for something utterly contemporary. It may give purists pause, but it's the same assembling of influences her fellow musicians make, without trying to be so damn cagey about it.

"Going back to the roots of our genre, going back to the Carters and that era, it was people who were living in the country and who were influenced by whatever music was around then and bringing their stories to life in that way," Clare tells Nash Country Weekly on a recent visit to the office. "That's all I wanted to do."

In person, she's tall—not Taylor Swift tall, but striking nonetheless with an athletic poise that hints at her dance background. She's in town to play a special acoustic show in a Nashville club with fellow maverick Miranda Lambert, whose Roadside Bars and Pink Guitars Tour she'll join this fall.

Clare's self-titled debut EP, which is available for mass consumption Sept. 18, features "Move On" and four other tracks pulling together her cross-genre and multiform influences. And yet, the rural farm girl



is still present: in the lead-footed "Ferarri," she rhapsodizes about her \$2,000 car like it's the pinnacle of Italian luxury; she details her attraction and affection for a no-frills, hard-working man in "Tuxedo"; and she deals with a close-to-home loss in the poignant "Old Hat."

In "Move On," Clare exhibits a feverish, let-me-finish-before-I-lose-mynerve delivery that nails the song's agitated desire for a male friend. She recorded the vocal take immediately after completing the lyrics.

"Everything for me is about the emotion and capturing that, and is the way I'm singing—is that the

way I feel about it? That was what 'Move On' was," she explains of the approach. "There are some moments you can't get back. You sing it first time down, there's a certain moment of inspiration that you'll never get on another take. That was the one and maybe the only one."

The song was inspired by a reallife friendship with a guy she really wanted to date, but was too shy to ask and couldn't get him to do the same. She assures him it's OK and that she's receptive to any advances he'd like to make.

"And I still haven't let him know the song's about him!" she exclaims, laughing. "I'm too shy and I talk about that in the song, but I know that about myself."

Clare had previously enjoyed hearing her independently released singles like "Get Out" being played on SiriusXM, but the thrill of hearing "Move On" organically for the first time was something new.

"I was driving to a radio visit in Detroit and my [promotion] rep and I were in the car together and we had the radio on," she recalls. "And she and I were talking, just chitchatting, and I heard the intro and just was like, 'Michelle, stop!' And turned it up-cranked it, got my phone out, recorded it, freaked out."

The breathless vocal technique Clare uses in "Move On" pops up again in "Ferrari" and "Tuxedo," recalling Pink's warm lower register and Rihanna's use of syncopation. Synthesizers whir and beats thump throughout, giving Clare's music a sense of motion that invites dancing. That's an integral part of her songwriting process, having trained with Janet Jackson's backing dancers before landing in Nashville at Belmont University.

"It's another form of expression," she asserts. "It is a huge influence for me when I'm making music, thinking about it from that dance musicality perspective and making it something that you can dance to, whether it's like dancing in a club free-for-all or dancing like you're Janet Jackson's back-up dancers and it's a choreographed thing."

In Nashville, Clare got serious







(Clockwise from above) Clare inks her deal with MCA Nashville; a little recording studio selfie; showing off her guitar chops at Kicker Country Stampede earlier in 2015.



CLARE DUNN CONTINUED

about songwriting and learning how to play the guitar. Unlike many lead players who started learning at the impressionable age of 11 or 12, Clare had to fast-track her fretwork skills while studying for college courses.

"I was trying to play catch-up. I had some great teachers," she admits. "After that, it was a lot of time spent in my bedroom listening to records, then a lot of time spent trying to make my own records and I learned a lot in that process as well." This quick learning process was not without its downsides, however. "I still to this day have two friends because of it and that's it, and if you're willing to give up all that you're fine!"

So far Clare says she hasn't met with a lot of the typical, sexist assumptions people make about female guitarists. There was a soundman at one of her club gigs who was befuddled that she didn't have an acoustic guitar and that she was

going to play lead, but for the most part people have been pretty cool about it. In Clare's eyes, it's really about the tunes anyway.

"When the music's good, that's all that matters," she says. "There's plenty of non-great dude guitar players out there, too. You don't hear about them because it maybe didn't make the cut. If it's good, that's all I keep my eyes on."

In a sharp departure from Nashville norms, Clare produced the EP herself—practically unheard of for a new artist. It speaks to the level of confidence she has in her abilities and also the certainty she has about her sound. "When I came to town I just always had my own sound in my head," she says. "I heard things certain ways. I was obsessed with sounds in the recording process. I tried working with other producers and it always came back to, it's not me, it's not my sound, it's not who I am. It's their interpretation of who

I am and it's their sound but that's not me. That's part of why Universal signed me, because I knew exactly who I was and I was very upfront that I want to make my music. They were very supportive in that."

"When it's your everything on the line, you—or at least I do—you bust it until it's right and you bust it until it's the most honest representation of what you're trying to come across and do," she adds.

That honesty translates to Clare's performances. As she moves her body and drops in bursts of lead guitar, fans feel welcome to get swept up in the energy and move right along with her.

"My goal is to create an environment where it's not about us up onstage," she says. "It's about people out there in the crowd and it's about making sure that they're having a great time but also encouraging people to whatever your dream is, go after it." NCW

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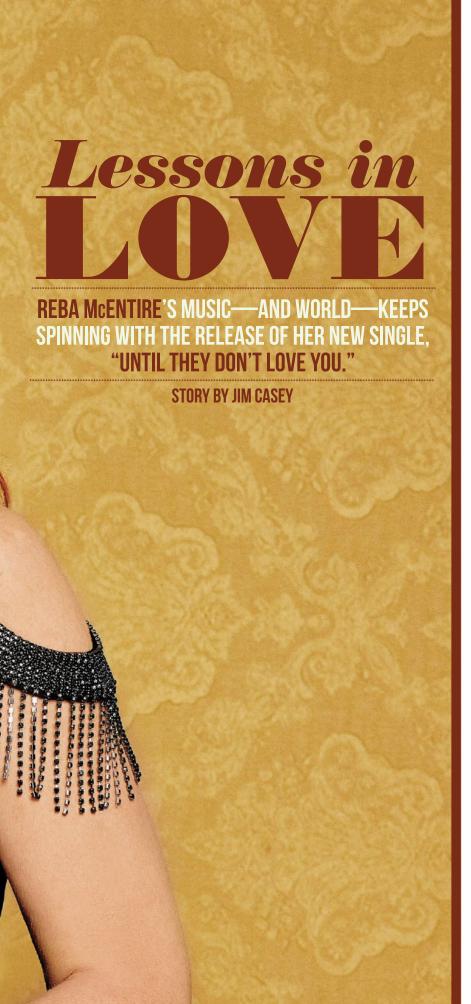
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Few personalities are as beloved as Reba McEntire. For the past 30-plus years, the sassy redhead has been a kinetic force in country music, television, film and pop culture. So there were more than a few boohoos on Aug. 3 when Reba announced a separation from her husband of 26 years, Narvel Blackstock. But as they say in the biz, the show must go on.

That's why Reba is in the Nash Country Weekly office—with Narvel in tow—a couple of days after their heavy-hearted announcement. She's ready to talk about the future, which includes the release of the second single, "Until They Don't Love You," from her recent Billboard No. 1 album, Love Somebody, as well as a reprise of her showcase in Las Vegas with Brooks & Dunn in December.

In the lead-up to the Aug. 8 radio premiere of "Until They Don't Love You" on *America's Morning Show*, Reba began adding the song to a handful of her live sets, before taking her talents to New York City to perform the tune on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*.

"I was very encouraged by singing ["Until They Don't Love You"] live, because we've been doing it onstage a lot, and when we played it for the folks in Davenport, Iowa—we had over 27,000 people at the fair—we got a big response for that song."

Filled with guitars, piano, a gospel-like chorus and Reba's rapidfire delivery, the song is such an upbeat musical jam that it takes a listen or two to realize it's a doleful story of







(Above) Reba recently visited The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, where she sang "Until They Don't Love You" and participated in one of Jimmy's audience gags. (Below) The celebrated Together In Vegas show puts Reba and Brooks & Dunn back on one stage.



REBA McENTIRE CONTINUED

love hitting the bricks. "Love," as the album's moniker suggests, is a constant theme throughout the 12-song offering that includes song titles such as "Love Land," "Promise Me Love," "Love Somebody" and "Until They Don't Love You."

"It just happened that way," says Reba. "I was doing an interview and they said, 'The theme of this album has to be love,' and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, yes it is.' Of course, dumb Dora me didn't even realize that. I didn't put two and two together. I called the album *Love Somebody*

because that's a song I really did love. I don't usually do positive love songs, and I thought that would be a great one to name it, and I'm glad I did because love truly is the theme of the album. You've got to love somebody. And the rest of the album is you're falling in, you're falling out, you're hurt, you're never going to love again, but maybe you will, it's just all about love."

Reba's love of creating music and the love she has for her fans also played a big role in the making of the album. The almost-five-year gap between Reba's 2010 album All the Women I



Am and 2015's Love Somebody felt like an eternity when you consider Reba released 26 studio albums in the 33 years before Love Somebody, and that's not even taking into consideration her two holiday albums, three live albums and 14 compilation albums.

"I missed it, and I really didn't think I was ever gonna make another album until [Big Machine CEO] Scott [Borchetta] came and asked me to be the first artist on the Nash Icon label," says Reba. "I was thrilled to do that. Getting to record again, getting to be on the radio again, having new music out-and the fans are so excit-



Country Tremors

THIS YEAR IS A SILVER ANNIVERSARY OF SORTS FOR REBA. IT WAS 25 YEARS AGO THAT SHE STARRED IN HER FIRST MOTION PICTURE, 1990'S *TREMORS*, WHICH HAS BECOME A CULT CLASSIC OVER THE LAST QUARTER-CENTURY.

"Tremors was my first movie. I was touring on the weekends and then flying commercially to L.A. and then getting on a puddle jumper to the location and then getting to the hotel room about two or three o'clock in the morning. They'd come knocking on my door at four a.m., saying, 'We're ready for you to come to the trailer and get on set,' so I'd go out there to the desert-and it was so cold-to this old trailer that was awful and dusty. I'd go back to sleep, and then they'd come and get me, 'Are you ready? We're ready for you in makeup,' which was nothing but some mascara and putting my hair in a ponytail. And then I'd go back to my trailer and they'd knock

on my door and I'd say, 'Are you ready for me?' and they'd say, 'No, it's lunchtime.' This was the first day, my first time on a movie set. I was back in my trailer, and I was trying to figure out what to do next, maybe read a book. Finally they knock on my door again late in the afternoon and they were ready for me. It was the scene where they pull the Graboid out from under the back of the truck and I go, 'Phew, stinks too,' and they go, 'Cut, that's a wrap.' And I go, 'Yesssssss! I got my first words in a movie.' I was jumping around and they all thought I was nuts. But it was so fun. I didn't think I'd ever do another movie, but I did 10 more."

ed about it, that's the payoff. I enjoy it all, but that makes it so worthwhile, for them to say, 'Oh my gosh, we're loving the new album.' It's like, 'Shoo, wow, I've still got it, I can still pick a song.' And also just to be in the business I love to be in, it's fun."

Reba's fun will continue in December when the second leg of Reba, Brooks & Dunn: Together in Vegas hits Sin City for eight more dates. During the first set of showcases in June and July, Reba only played one song—"Going Out Like That"—from her new album. However, fans who have tickets to one of the December

shows can expect to hear "Until They Don't Love You" on the set list, as well as a few surprises.

"Oh yeah, we'll probably amp it up a little more on the cowboy style for those shows, because that's NFR week, National Finals Rodeo," says Reba. "That's where I got my start in the business, so we'll cowboy it up a little bit."

Between promoting her new single and gearing up for her Vegas dates, Reba is staying busy, but beyond that, she doesn't have her future mapped out. The fiery go-getter is looking forward to flying by the seat

of her pants. She always has.

"I look forward to what's next," she says. "People always ask me, 'What are you going to do next?' Well, I dunno, God hasn't told me yet. God is my manager, my tour manager, my scheduler, everything, and He'll come up with the greatest things. He's the one who gave me Annie Get Your Gun and the Reba TV show and presents those things to me. And He always lets me have the choice of refusing and saying, 'No, I don't want to do that,' but I know He'll give it to someone else, so I always step up and say, 'I'll take it." NCW

TAKE THIS

IT'S TIME TO CLOCK IN—WE'VE GOT THE 40 HARDEST WORKING SONGS IN COUNTRY MUSIC.

Country music throughout the decades has not only embraced its working-class roots, it's made a point to praise them. Yes, work is tough, as Merle Haggard wrote in "Workin' Man's Blues" or as George Strait sang in "Amarillo by Morning." But to the hard-core country fan, hard work and sticking to it also represents a badge of pride. That's why so many country songs are devoted to the working class—after all, it's the core audience. As we observe Labor Day on Sept. 7, we've picked 40—in honor of the 40-hour workweek—country songs that truly get to the heart of the working man and woman. And no one

embodies that heroic figure better than George Strait, who has been one of the hardest-working men over his 30-plus-year career. King George is represented on our Top 40 with "Amarillo by Morning," as well as being featured in Kenny Chesney's "Shiftwork." But he also acknowledged everyday working folks in other hits like "Heartland," "I Can Still Make Cheyenne" and even "Troubadour," dedicated to the traveling singer who's *still tryin' to make a name*. So, take a little time from your stressful day, kick back and savor these 40 songs—only one from each artist—about what all of you do every day: namely, work hard.

WADE BOWEN | 2012

Whether it's a foreman breathing down your neck, a boss riding your butt, or logging too many miles on the road until it feels like my brain is fried, feels like my soul is dead, a beatdown is a beatdown. Have a drink and listen to Wade Bowen's thumping rocker. You'll feel better. And, as Wade suggests, you'll get back up again.



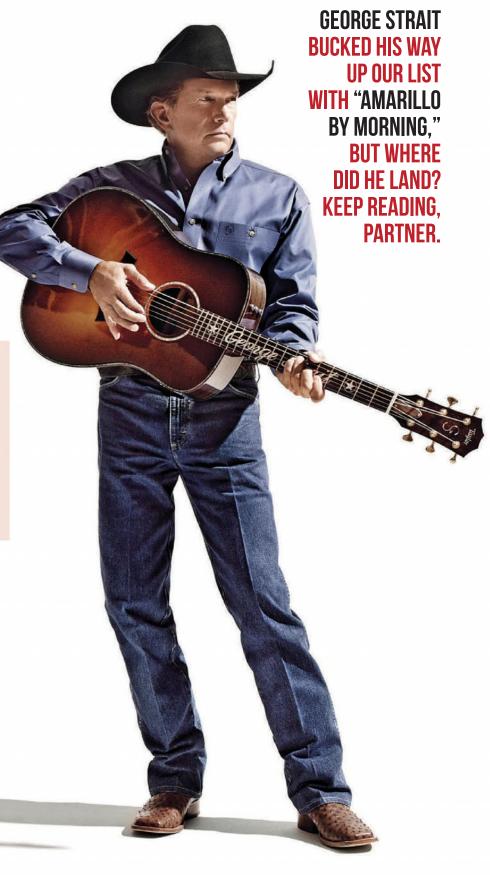
JAMEY JOHNSON | 2006

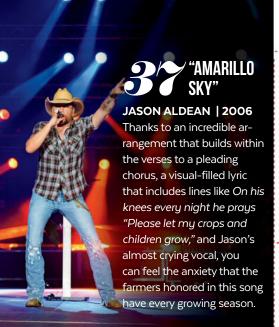
Don't get so busy making a living you forget to make a life. That's the message in this heartbreaking ode to the hard-workin' man, whose son wants to pay Daddy a fair wage for a little of his time. Jamey's typically gravelly voice softens in this tune, making it worthy of two tear-filled tissues.



DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS | 2010

The title says a mouthful, but DBT does more than put into verse the way many people feel about trying to live on fast-food wages. There's the underlying message of chasing your dream and, when you accomplish it, knowing you have to work extra hard because that crappy old day job is still nipping at your heels.





36 "FAMILY MAN"

CRAIG CAMPBELL | 2010

Even temp work is better than no work in Craig Campbell's aching ballad about living paycheck to paycheck. From wondering how he'll buy food for his babies to paying for a used truck over time, it's real life in 4/4 time.

35 "CALL THE CAPTAIN"

STEEP CANYON RANGERS | 2007

The Steep Canyon Rangers' despondent bluegrass ballad about the perils of coal mining sounds like it could have been written a century earlier. Within that turn-of-the-century aura is the relatable everyman's struggle of yearning for a better life outside of the mines where there are clear blue skies and a whole lot more.

L"LONG HOT Summer day"

TURNPIKE TROUBADOURS | 2010

The Turnpike Troubadours took the John Hartford bluegrass ditty, which harkens back to the Twainesque era of working on barges and tugboats, and punched it up with an electrifying fiddle solo and boot-stomping beat that almost makes working on the Illinois River in the summer heat sound idyllic.

MUST-SEE DVD

We're giving away 5 copies of George Strait's DVD, The Cowboy Rides Away: Live From AT&T Stadium, to 5 lucky Nash Country Weekly readers. To enter, visit CountryWeekly.com today. Sweepstakes deadline: Sept. 17, 2015. Good luck!



"WORKING IN The coal mine"

THE JUDDS | 1985

The Judds reference a classic work song setting in their take on "Working in the Coal Mine," originally a hit for R&B singer Lee Dorsey. Along with anvil noises, the lyrics are pure, searching misery that wonder when the hardship will end, while the upbeat arrangement adds an almostjeering counterpoint.



"WORKIN' MAN (NOWHERE TO GO)"

NITTY GRITTY DIRT BAND | 1988

Being out of work is tough, and the situation never sounded more grim than in the Dirt Band's late '80s hit. You feel for the guy's shame and embarrassment, both professionally and socially, of not being able to find gainful employment.



"ONE MORE DOLLAR"

GILLIAN WELCH | 1996

This folky tune from the Americana darling depicts a day laborer in the orchards who yearns to return home to his family. He puts his money away a dollar at a time, but with the freezing branches and a bad roll in a dice game, it's unlikely he'll ever make it.

"DRINKING CLASS"

LEE BRICE | 2014

There's not a dang thing wrong with earning an honest living breaking your back and working up a sweat. In fact, it's a source of pride, as Lee Brice boasts in this anthemic salute to working hard and playing harder.



"SOMETHING

SUGARLAND | 2005

At some point, we all have the sneaking suspicion that we're wasting our lives eight hours (or more) a day at work. This breakout Sugarland hit floats the idea that we should work to live, not live to work, and that bigger and better may be out there somewhere.

"MARIANO"

ROBERT EARL KEEN | 1989

There's a tender ache in REK's voice as he sings about Mariano, a virtuous Mexican laborer who works just like a piston in an engine so he can send his family all his weekly wages, saving nothing for himself. Eventually deported and unaccounted for, Mariano's plight for a better life becomes too haunting to forget.



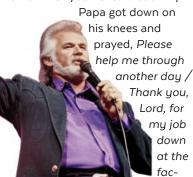
GARTH BROOKS & HUEY LEWIS | 2007

'80s faves Huey Lewis and the News, whose members collaborated on the song, were a blues-rock band at heart. But they had plenty of country in their souls. With lines like, Damned if you do / Damned if you don't / I'm supposed to get a raise next week / You know damn well I won't, this tapped right into the frustrations of the average working stiff. Garth and Huey pound it out with fervor.



KENNY ROGERS | 1988

Kenny's touching tune about the daily struggles of a factory worker with a family of nine serves as a poignant reminder that it's OK to dream bigger, but don't forget to be thankful for what you have. That's why



tory.

'ONE MORE PAYMENT" **CLINT BLACK | 1991**

Why do we work so hard? Livin' isn't free, unfortunately, and there's always some damn house payment to be made or car that needs to be fixed. Clint's bright, Texas swing arrangement adds a touch of levity to the proceedings, but this much is clear: we get out of our obligations only when we check out for good.

"BLOWIN' SMOKE"

Let's be honest. Every job, no matter how much you love it, can be a grind now and then, but if you're on your feet all day slingin' hash, making less than minimum wage and pulling doubles for the tips, the grinds are a little greater. Kacey nails the attitude of a waitress who doesn't have a damn left to give.

"CAFE ON THE CORNER" SAWYER BROWN | 1992

This classic pays homage to a farmer forced from his fields because of falling prices. He's relegated to sipping coffee at a local cafe, feeling completely out of place, and wondering if he'll ever tend to the earth again.

"I'M TRYIN" TRACE ADKINS | 2001

With his rumbling baritone, Trace Adkins can convey a message like no other, and in "I'm Tryin," he vacillates between anxiety and apology for simply doing the best he can to provide for his family and make his daddy proud. Listen to the original on his Chrome album. The opening strings will break your heart.



"LORD HAVE MERCY ON THE WORKING MAN" **TRAVIS TRITT | 1992**

Travis Tritt's spin on the workingman's anthem highlights the economic imbalance of working people and the wealthy. The workingman breaks his back to break even, while the wealthy man dances unawares. It's as relevant today as it was in '92.

'eat at Joe's" **SUZY BOGGUSS | 1992**

Food service is difficult, thankless work—a combination of salesperson and shrink, as this jazzy album gem from Suzy makes clear. At an all-night diner, she peddles greasy food and attends to the drunks and night owls of the world for measly tips, hoping her Prince Charming may one day sit at a table.

TRACY LAWRENCE | 1991

A big chunk of folks out there can count on having to work their whole lives and maybe never feel totally secure. Tracy's "Runnin' Behind" is a lighthearted look at that grim reality, which means the fragile balance can come crashing down if the car won't start.

'EIGHTEEN WHEELS AND A DOZEN ROSES" KATHY MATTEA | 1988

Longtime trucker Charlie is rolling those big wheels one last time before he hangs up his driving hat to spend the rest of his life with the one that he loves. Writers Gene and Paul Nelson penned this song so perfectly and with such loving detail that you actually conjure up a mental picture of its hard-working protagonist. This won CMA Single of the Year in 1988.



"SHIFTWORK" KENNY CHESNEY & GEORGE STRAIT | 2007

Holding down inconvenient hours at the convenience store is nothing but a bunch of shiftwork. And they are saying "shiftwork," right? Because the way they extend the first syllable almost sounds like . . . well, you get the picture. Amazing how a song about the monotony of everyday work can actually sound fresh and non-repetitious.

> "HARD HAT AND A HAMMER" ALAN JACKSON

Country's patron saint of working people, Alan gives kudos to the blue-collar workers who put in their hours and never complain about the call of duty. The upbeat song also features the sound of Alan striking an anvil once owned by his father, who passed away in 2000.

'SAWMILL"

MEL TILLIS | 1973

The sawmill of Mel's tune is a grueling place where no worker ever turns a profit. The character singing can't even scrape together enough cash to keep his woman living in the same town. Not that he needed any more excuses to get out, but not being able to provide for family is a good sign it's time to move on.

E "EAST BOUND AND DOWN"

JERRY REED | 1977

Leave it to Jerry Reed to upshift the unsavory occupation of bootlegging beer into an anthem for every truckdriving Southerner with an unquenchable thirst for adventure. When the boys are thirsty in Atlanta and there's beer in Texarkana, the big-riggin' Snowman will bring it back no matter what it takes.



УИИНОГ CASH 1972

Johnny Paycheck may have told his boss to take this job and shove

it, but Johnny Cash's hard-working man doesn't tell his supervisor, Oney, anything. On his last day on the job, he plans to show him who's really the boss. And the chuckle that Cash releases at the end sounds a little "been there, done that."

"WORKING

JOHN CONLEE | 1985

With a simple title of "Working Man," John Conlee does what he does best: painting a picture of working for a man who is never satisfied. John examines several different professions and reveals that each has its own struggles that slowly wear down the worker just trying to make ends meet.

BILL MONROE | 1954

Bill Monroe's bluegrass ballad "John Henry" gives a literal example of the phrase "working yourself to death." The song chronicles the folktale of John Henry, a steel-driving man for the railroad who lives up to his premonition that

outworking the steam-powered drill will lead to his death, proving that sometimes it pays to half-ass a job.



Singing songs about the hard-working men and women is nothing out of the norm for Alan Jackson. Here are a few of our other favorites that could've easily made our Top 40 list.

- "CHASIN' THAT **NEON RAINBOW"**
- "IT'S 5 O'CLOCK SOMEWHERE"
- "SMALL TOWN SOUTHERN MAN"
- "LITTLE MAN"
- "GOOD TIME"

"SIX DAYS ON THE ROAD"

DAVE DUDLEY | 1963

The life of a long-haul trucker is lonely and exhausting, white lines stretching on to infinity with nothing but coffee to keep you going and your loved ones miles away for days at a time. Dave Dudley perfectly captured that in this classic trucking tune, which has been covered by George Jones, Sawyer Brown, Steve Earle, George Thorogood and many others.



AARON TIPPIN | 1993

Aaron surely knew about blue-collar life, having worked at an aluminum company while he was trying to make it as an artist. In this hit, he pays sincere tribute to the men and women who get up early and put in long hours to build America and keep it running. It's not something you learn in a college course—you earn those credits in sweat.



LORETTA LYNN | 1970

This iconic tune was pure biography for Loretta-born into a family of eight kids in Appalachia, Loretta witnessed her coal-mining father breaking his back to put food on the table. Her mother's hands bled from the washboard she used on the clothes. Luxuries for the kids were few and life was hard, but Loretta remains defiantly proud of how she grew up.



ALABAMA | 1985

About the time this was released in the mid-'80s, the American industrial worker was being given the boot by the government and society in general. So along came this song that paid proper respect to the Detroit auto worker, Pittsburgh steel mill workers and the Kansas wheat field farmer, all name-checked in the lyrics, as a great big thank-you.



'HARD WORKIN' MAN" **BROOKS & DUNN | 1993**

It's good to take pride in your work, which is exactly what Brooks & Dunn say in the title track of their sophomore album. The people they describe end each day with calloused hands and sweat on their brows, but still look forward to getting up the next day just to do it again.



"AMARILLO BY MORNING" **GEORGE STRAIT | 1983**

It's the definitive ode to the traveling rodeo cowboy, but those who toil in any occupation could make it their own. What makes this tune a little different is the plaintive joy it evokes, even in the midst of the cowboy's broken bones and endless miles of travel. As the third verse sums up, I ain't got a dime, but what I got is mine / I ain't rich, but Lord I'm free. It never hit No. 1, but it's considered one of George's signature songs.



'SIXTEEN TONS" TENNESSEE ERNIE FORD | 1955

There is a bucket load of coal mining songs on this list but none of them are as heartbreaking—or backbreaking—as Ernie Ford's tale of wasting away down in the mines. You load sixteen tons, what do you get? / Another day older and deeper in debt is depressing enough, but when you factor in the debt bondage of owing your soul to the company store, it makes you thankful labor unions ended the truck system.



TAKE THIS JOB AND SHOVE IT" **JOHNNY PAYCHECK | 1977**

Who hasn't wanted to walk up to the boss and declare this manifesto? And who better to serve as spokesman than gritty Mr. Paycheck himself? But even Johnny has to admit that it's a fantasy at best, as the lyrics declare, I'd give the shirt right off of my back / If I had the guts to say / Take this job and shove it. Still, as fantasies go, it's pretty kicking.



WORKIN' MAN'S BLUES" MERLE HAGGARD | 1969

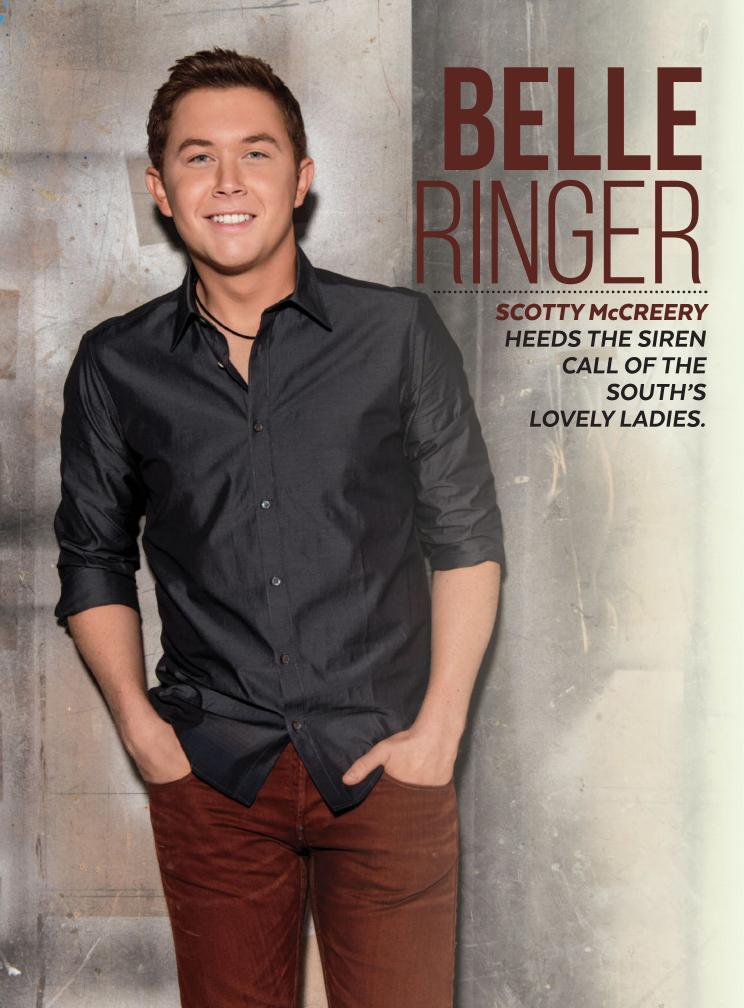
Merle wrote this as a tribute to the folks that largely made up his core audience: the blue-collar working class. It's part lament and part declaration of pride, as Merle brilliantly describes the can't-get-out-from-under existence of the average working guy. But because our main character works so diligently, he's never been on welfare and furthermore, never will be. That's the working man to a T.



9 TO 5" DOLLY PARTON | 1980

Even in the corporate world, anyone not at the top of the food chain is drained of valuable resources and slowly ground down one day at a time. Dolly masterfully illustrated that in her Grammy-winning tune from the film of same name: They just use your mind and they never give you credit, she says, but the workers keep showing up. In keeping with the buoyant, danceable disco beat of the tune, there's a sliver of hope in Dolly's message. The boss can't take away your dreams, and one day the tide is going to turn for the better. It almost sounds like she's talking about revolution.







THE ULTIMATE BELLE

Is it Gone With the Wind's Scarlett O'Hara or Melanie Wilkes? Golden Girls' Blanche Devereaux, Designing Women's Suzanne Sugarbaker, Savannah's own home-cooking queen, Paula Deen? According to Scotty, she's none of the above. "I



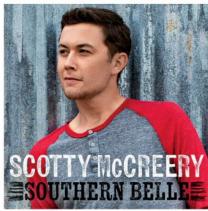
think every guy's dream Southern belle growing up is DAISY DUKE," he says. She may have traded in her hoop skirts for short shorts, but when it came to having that deadly combination of charm and sass, Daisy had it in spades.



When Scotty McCreery was a mere 16 years old, he was introduced to the world while competing for one of reality TV's most sought-after titles on FOX's American Idol. Of course, he went on to become the season 10 winner and since that time he has grown from a teenager to a young man with the same grace he showed on the *Idol* stage.

Scotty's music shows a similar gradual and appropriate evolution. His latest single, "Southern Belle," (from a forthcoming album) extols the virtues of those wonderful women born down South, but reveals a more mature side of the North Carolina native with its decidedly edgy sound.

"I just think it's kind of where I'm at," he begins, calling Nash Country Weekly from the road. "I'm at that spot, not just musically, but in life where I'm growing up in general, so when I heard [the song], it wasn't like in my mind I thought, 'Oh, this will be the song that pushes the envelope'; I just thought it was a cool song, it was a lot different. [Universal A&R head] Brian Wright at the label told me, 'Don't let this scare you, but this is pretty cool.' And my producer said, We can make it cool, we can make it work.' Once I heard that, I was like, 'Yeah, let's get it. Let's put it on hold and record it tomorrow.' I just fell in love with the song. It's a little different, a little edgy, more grown-up. That's just



where I am right now."

The song's production is more contemporary than Scotty's previous releases and—as he puts it— "unique," but the pairing of his warm baritone to a lyric riddled with Southern visuals keeps it right in his wheelhouse. "It brings in a reference to Gone With the Wind," he says, laughing. "When was the last time you heard that in a song? It brings in Dukes of Hazzard. The whole song is nothing but imagery, which is a cool thing . . . Amazing grace in a Mason jar. Coming from the South, there's so much you can go with. Right out of the gate, it's painting that picture so you can see where the song takes place."

Lest the feelings of any non-Southern ladies out there get hurt by the song's sentiment, Scotty clarifies that he meets "belles" every day and they exist everywhere—not just

in the South. "No matter where we are on the road, whether it's folks that have moved there or not. Being a Southern belle is more about the personality, I would say. It's a trait that a lot of girls have, and it's something that most guys are drawn to," he muses.

Since a sizable chunk of Scotty's fans are of the female persuasion, it's probably politically advantageous for him to remain in the middle of the road when it comes to geographical preferences for women. His long-term girlfriend, however, is indeed a flower of the South. "She is a Southern belle and I've known her since kindergarten," he reveals. "It's a really cool thing. I'm a lucky guy."

While he isn't thinking about marriage just yet, Scotty does have a plan and some dreams about his life a few years from now. "I'm looking forward to these years right now, being 21, young and free and not having all those other responsibilities, but I'm also looking forward to going down the road and having a house and having kids," he says. "I've already picked out what kind of dog I'm going to have. I'm going to have an English bulldog and name him Brady after my favorite quarterback. Yeah, I'm looking forward to those days."

A belle, some babies and a bulldog-grown-up Scotty sounds sweeter than biscuits and honey.

the sweetest sound

THE GRAND OLE OPRY CELEBRATES 50) ears WITH ITS "SWEETHEART" CONNIE SMITH

STORY BY BOB DOERSCHUK

On August 8, the Grand Ole Opry devoted the first hour of its broadcast to a single theme. That's rare, but so was the artist being honored that night: Country Music Hall of Fame member Connie Smith, on her 50th anniversary as an Opry member.

A standing ovation, loving tributes and performances by Del McCoury, Jeannie Seely, Mel Tillis and The Whites, a presentation by Opry vice president and general manager Pete Fisher of two dozen roses and an engraved gold bracelet, several powerful performances by Connie herself, all of it emceed exuberantly by her husband Marty Stuart—added up to a night that the country music legend will never forget.

One night she admits to forgetting, though, was the one that inspired these festivities.

"I honestly don't remember the night I was inducted into the Opry," she says, speaking a few days previously at the office she and Marty keep outside of Nashville. "But it wasn't like it is now, where they ask you to join onstage. And it was 50 years ago!"

She grins and offers a helpless shrug. "I wish I could tell you what happened! But I do remember I was inducted the same night as Bob Luman. He was such a dynamic entertainer. He'd come in and just set the house on fire. So I thought it was great I got to join the same night he did."

It's typical that Connie would remember that milestone evening in terms of someone else's accomplishment. Admiring references to other





CONNIE SMITH CONTINUED

artists thread through her conversation, contemporary stars as well as the giants who influenced her as she was growing up, one of 14 children, in West Virginia.

"Sometimes we couldn't get any reception because back then we had battery radios and we lived in all these hills and mountains," she recalls. "But any time we could get it, we would gather around and listen to the Opry. The Louvin Brothers were my favorites at that time. I also loved listening to Ray Price, Ella Fitzgerald, Brook Benton, Dinah Washington and Frank Sinatra—all those great singers. I got to hear the purity of Jean Shepard's and Kitty Wells's singing. I loved Mahalia Jackson's singing. If she wanted to take a breath in the middle of the word, she did."

Everything she heard nourished Connie as she developed her own style, a unique blend of crystal clarity, confident technique and deep insight into lyrics. It was fully formed by the time she won a talent contest in 1963 near Columbus, Ohio. Luckily "Whisperin" Bill Anderson happened to be there

that day. Impressed, he brought the 23-year-old to Nashville and arranged for her to perform on another celebrated radio show, Ernest Tubb's *The Midnight Jamboree*.

That occasion, unlike her Opry induction, she remembers clearly. "It was March the 28th, 1964, the first night I ever came to Nashville. I got to meet Kitty Wells that night. In fact, I sat on a Coke machine and watched Johnny Phillips' little boy while Johnny was singing with Kitty. I also met [Grand Ole Opry announcer] Grant Turner. And I got to meet Loretta [Lynn], my all-time favorite girl singer. That was a big, big thrill."

It also marked a turning point in Connie's life. "Even when Bill invited me to Nashville to do the Record Shop [i.e., the *Jamboree*], I didn't think my dream of being a full-time singer was going to come true. I just loved to sing! It was my way of communicating with people. My heart came out when I was singing. Then I had this opportunity and I took it. I don't know how it happened to me and not to a whole lot of other people—people with great voices. But we each have a calling

and I believe this was mine. And God brought it about."

Not long after that, Connie walked for the first time onto the Opry stage to perform for listeners all across America. "The main thing I remember was how scared I was. I'd always heard about somebody's knees knocking. I thought that was just an expression, but mine were literally hitting together. And my voice was coming out in gusts; I couldn't control it. When I finished singing, by the time I got off the stage, I was bawling my eyes out."

Before long, Connie was a regular on the program. While her voice and increasingly comfortable demeanor had much to do with that, it also helped that the legendary Roy Acuff became one of her greatest supporters. Not only did he dub her "the Sweetheart of the Grand Ole Opry," he also made sure that she was featured on the show as frequently as possible.

She smiles appreciatively at her memories of the man she still calls Mr. Acuff. "My band and I would go in the back and rehearse what we were going to do on the Opry. Then







we'd go out there. Just as I got to the middle of the stage, Mr. Acuff would come up and tell me what to sing. I'd just say, 'You're The King,' and we'd change and do the song he wanted us to do. As often as not, he would say, 'Sing the song that brought you here."

That was "Once a Day," Bill Anderson's heartbreaking ballad that launched Connie's career in 1964. More than that, it made history: No female singer had ever released a debut single that peaked at No.1, where it lodged for eight weeks. It remains an essential part of her set list today, along with "If It Ain't Love," "Where Is My Castle?," "Run Away Little Tears," "Just One Time," "I Never Stopped Loving You" "You and Your Sweet Love" and her show-stopping rendition of "How Great Thou Art."

Each of these songs reflects Connie's meticulousness in choosing only repertoire that she can sing honestly, from the heart, even through decades of performance.

"I've turned down so many songs because I didn't want to be identified with what the song is saving," she explains. "When I came to Nashville, it was hard to find songs I would feel good about singing anywhere. The girls' songs they would play for me didn't have any meat on them. And I didn't want to do a lot of cheating songs. So I'd pick the men's songs, which had so much more strength, and change a line or a word or two to where a woman can sing it. In that way, they couldn't compare me with Patsy Cline or anybody else. That was important because back then there was room for a million but only one of each. If you sounded like somebody else, they'd shut you out."

For Connie, the opposite has always been true of the Opry. "Our part is to let the young singers know that they are welcome, even though what they do is different from what we did," she says. "They're the new breed of what's called country music now. If they're interested, I'm happy to talk to them. But I'm not there to tell them what they're doing is right or wrong."

The Sweetheart of the Opry cracks a smile and then laughs. "Shoot, I don't know what I could tell them, because I'm still learning myself!" NCW

10 BILLBOARD TOP 10s

Over her 50-plus-year career, Connie Smith has had a number of Billboard Top 10 hits, including these favorites that charted at their respective numbers.

> #1. "ONCE A DAY" 1964

#2. "AIN'T HAD NO LOVIN'" 1966

#3. "THE HURTIN'S ALL OVER" 1966

> #4. "CINCINNATI, OHIO" 1967

#5. "BURNING A HOLE IN MY MIND" 1967

#6. "YOU AND YOUR SWEET LOVE" 1969

#7. "IF IT AIN'T LOVE (LET'S LEAVE IT ALONE)"

#8. "LOVE IS THE LOOK YOU'RE LOOKING FOR" 1972

> #9. "I CAN'T REMEMBER" 1965

> #10. "I'LL COME RUNNIN'" 1967



(Above) Connie belts out one of her many hits at the Grand Ole Opry in 1974; (right) Opry vice president Pete Fisher presents Connie with an inscribed gold bracelet to commemorate her 50th Opry anniversary as husband Marty Stuart looks on.





ANDREA ZONN

ANDREA ZONN IS ABOUT

as "insider" as it gets in Nashville. The singer/violin wizard has been a wellknown, in-demand name on the Music Row recording scene practically since she made the move from her Illinois home nearly 30 years ago. Her résumé would impress even the most blasé music veteran-session work with the likes of Vince Gill. Trace Adkins and Trisha Yearwood, plus a 12-year run as a member of James Taylor's touring band, among her many credits.

Now, at age 46, no less, Andrea has emerged from her behind-the-scenes shelter to release her first full-length album of original songs (and second overall), Rise, which hits stores and online retailers on Sept. 25. Andrea co-wrote all 10 tracks and welcomed her longtime buddies Vince. James. Trace, bluegrass fave Sam Bush and others aboard for guest appearances.

The decision to finally release a collection of her own was hardly an artistic conceit. Real life dealt her some harsh blows recently, and Andrea simply felt the need to answer back. "There was a series of events." Andrea begins with a smile, as she settles into a dining room chair inside her East Nashville home. "I call it the 'doozy of a decade.' Our family sort of had a period of one thing after another, which happens sometimes. My father was ill and he passed away. Then I got divorced." Andrea also went through every parent's scariest nightmare as her son Leonard became ill and required a series of brain surgeries. "He's well now and going to school," Andrea assures. "He's a very bright kid and has lots of friends, so things are good."

The personal hardships became a catalyst for writing songs. Andrea found that the therapeutic nature of pouring out one's heart helped her survive the rocky times. "There was a lot of catharsis around my son's illness and other life events," she says evenly. "I'm very analytical and philosophical and all those things, and I thought I might have something to say. The writing has a personal and kind of a journaling aspect to it. But at the same time. I feel like it's universal. We have all been through hard things and beautiful things as well."

Andrea will agree that the title track and a selection called "Crazy If You Let It" were two that stemmed from the alternating ups and downs. "I wrote 'Crazy If You Let It' with Thomm Jutz and [former member of Foster & Lloyd] Bill Lloyd, who I think have the most double letters in their names," Andrea says with a respectful laugh. "The idea was that by the time you reach a certain age,



FOR FANS OF:

ALISON KRAUSS. TRISHA YEARWOOD. VINCE GILL

ESSENTIAL

"ANOTHER SWING AND A MISS"

"CRAZY IF YOU LET IT" (FEATURING VINCE GILL)

"YOU MAKE ME WHOLE" (FEATURING JAMES TAYLOR)

"WHERE THE WATER MEETS THE SKY"

All selections from Andrea's album Rise.

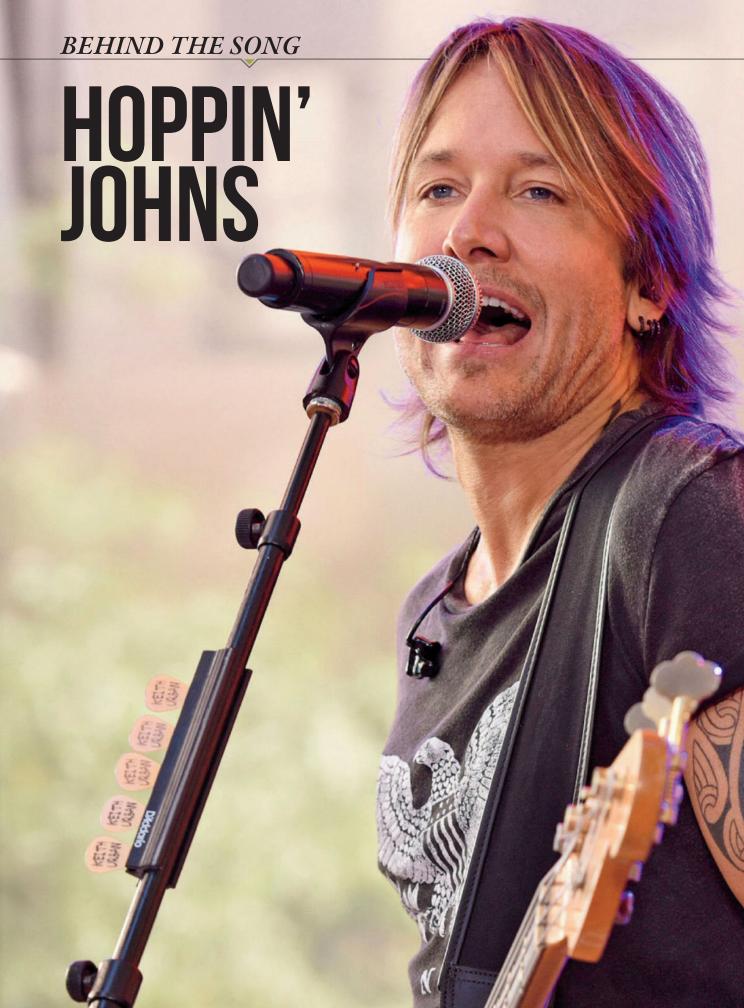
none of us gets out of this life unscathed. And like the song says, 'It can drive you crazy if you let it.' You can either choose to obsess on the bad things that happen or you can smile and move on. That resonated true for me and I hope it does speak to people."

Vince Gill, a perennial champion of Andrea's throughout her time in Nashville, provides harmony vocals and guitar on "Crazy If You Let It." "I still

do gigs with him," Andrea notes. "He's been a tremendous mentor over the years and I always say that making music with him feels like coming home." Andrea's longtime friend James Taylor shows up for harmony vocals on "You Make Me Whole," but as Andrea will laughingly confess, she nearly hesitated in dialing up the folk/rock icon.

"As long as I've worked with him, you'd think it would be easy," she says, smiling. "I have so much reverence for him, I was nervous to ask. He has quite a bit going on, as you can imagine. And I didn't want to put him in a place where he might be uncomfortable. But he said 'yes' before I could even finish asking him. Of course," she adds with a self-effacing laugh, "I started crying immediately. He went above and beyond for his part and he sang beautifully."

Andrea's pure, soothing voice lends an optimistic spirit to Rise. "I didn't want to preach to people or sound like I was giving a lecture," she says. "It's more of, 'this is what it took to get over some things and get to the other side.' You definitely learn from all that stuff. Writing the songs was kind of the easy part," Andrea adds as a smile curls upward. "It was the living through it that took some doing." BOB PAXMAN



Ross Copperman is known in Nashville as one of the best track guys around. Anyone whose name winds up beside his for a writing appointment probably won't have to worry about coming up with the music that day.

Sure enough, when Josh Osborne and Shane McAnally met with Ross a few months back, Ross came to the table with a melancholy-feeling piece of music that blew both guys away. "Josh and I felt responsible to find something great to go with Ross' amazing track," explains Shane.

As they began to sketch out verses to their song, the three men found a common thread in the small-town roots that made them who they are today. But they had no idea what to call the song. "We were kind of stumbling around and throwing out ideas, but nothing was really sticking," recalls Ross.

During the brainstorming, Shane got up to leave the room, but not before throwing out one more suggestion. "He said, 'We need something that is going to tie this all together like John Cougar-an image like that," Josh recalls. "I think as a joke, Ross said, 'John Deere, John 3:16,' stacking them on top of each other."

Though he may have been joking, Ross' offhanded comment had the ring of something special to both Shane and Josh. "We were like, what does that mean?" Josh says. "It was just 'Johns' that mark different points in our lives. It goes back to our roots of growing up in small towns. John Cougar was music. John Deere was working. John 3:16 was all of us going to church. It sort of just made sense."

"It was one of those magical things," adds Ross. "It was a serendipitous moment where it all came together. It was like, 'Oh my God, that's the longest title ever!' But we went with it because we knew it was something so special."

With a catchy title established for the tune, the three writers went back through the verses they had already written to refocus their direction on those three images. "It was one of those that honestly was a gift," Josh

"JOHN COUGAR, JOHN **DEERE, JOHN 3:16"**

KEITH URBAN

WRITERS: Ross Copperman, Shane McAnally, Josh Osborne





Josh Osborne





Ross Copperman

Ashley Gorley

We all know who The Peach Pickers are, and following their example of group writers are The Four Chorusmen, comprised of SHANE McANALLY, JOSH **OSBORNE, ROSS COPPERMAN and ASHLEY GORLEY.** The writers stumbled upon a four-way write by coincidence when they knocked out Jake Owen's "Real Life." Since then, they have been planning their schedules to recapture the magic that happens when they are all in the writing room together.

says. "It was just a matter of us chasing it long enough to catch it."

Once a demo was made for "John Cougar, John Deere, John 3:16," Keith Urban heard the nostalgic track and decided to put his own stamp on the tune. He went on to cut the song for his yet-to-be-released eighth studio album. After only two months on the charts, the song is yet another Top 10 hit for Keith.

"What they did to this song is so special," notes Shane. "I hardly ever say a song of mine is my favorite song, but this is one of those times. Every single line in this song means something. It's a song I take myself out of when I listen to it because I have a listener's reaction to it, almost as if I didn't write it. I am just so proud of this song."

ALANNA CONAWAY



-	OF	25 BILLBOARD ALBUMS	TOP 25 BILLBOARD SINGLES					The week of Sept. 5, 2015		
TW			ī	TW LW TITLE / ARTIST						
1	1	KILL THE LIGHTS LUKE BRYAN		1	2	YOUNG & CRAZY FRANKIE BALLARD		TO TW LW		110 AMERICANA AIRPLAY TITLE / ARTIST
2	_	ELVIS FOREVER ELVIS PRESLEY	:	2	3	HOUSE PARTY SAM HUNT		1	1	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL
3	2	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT	:	3	4	HELL OF A NIGHT DUSTIN LYNCH		2	2	PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES
4	5	JEKYLL + HYDE ZAC BROWN BAND	4	4	6	CRASH AND BURN THOMAS RHETT		3	3	STILL RICHARD THOMPSON
5	_	HOME PAT GREEN		5	7	BUY ME A BOAT CHRIS JANSON		4	5	WATKINS FAMILY HOUR WATKINS FAMILY HOUR
6	7	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH	1	6	8	JOHN COUGAR, JOHN DEERE, JOHN 3:16 • KEITH URBAN		5	7	DIDN'T IT RAIN AMY HELM
7	6	ANGELS AND ALCOHOL ALAN JACKSON	:	7	1	LOVING YOU EASY ZAC BROWN BAND		6	4	THE TRAVELING KIND EMMYLOU HARRIS & RODNEY CROWELL
8	3	SOMETHING MORE THAN FREE JASON ISBELL	1	8	9	LOSE MY MIND BRETT ELDREDGE		7	6	DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD
9	8	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN	!	9	10	SAVE IT FOR A RAINY DAY KENNY CHESNEY		8	8	BITTERSWEET KASEY CHAMBERS
10	11	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE	1	ю	5	KISS YOU IN THE MORNING MICHAEL RAY		9	11	CALL ME INSANE DALE WATSON
11	9	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN	1	11	12	LIKE A WRECKING BALL ERIC CHURCH			12	ASHES & DUST WARREN HAYNES FEAT. RAILROAD EARTH
12	13	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT	1	12	13	FLY MADDIE & TAE				TOP 5 TRENDING
	10	NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL COUNTRY,	1	13	14	GONNA WANNA TONIGHT		1	Q	TOP 5 TRENDING COUNTRY SONGS*
13	IU	VOLUME 8 VADIOUS ADTISTS								
13	-	VOLUME 8 • VARIOUS ARTISTS	-	\dashv	_	CHASE RICE	1	TW	TITLI	E / ARTIST
13	4	VOLUME 8 • VARIOUS ARTISTS MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY	1	14	15	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE		TW 1	SC	DUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY
		MICHAEL RAY	-	14		ANYTHING GOES			SC SC	OUTHERN BELLE
14	4 12	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY CRASH MY PARTY	1		16	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE LET ME SEE YA GIRL		1	SC SC ST LU	OUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY RIP IT DOWN
14	4 12	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN PAGEANT MATERIAL	1	15	16	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL STRIP IT DOWN		1 2	SC SC ST LU TA SA	PUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN KE YOUR TIME
14 15 16	4 12 14	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES GREATEST HITS SO FAR	1	15	16 23 19	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN BREAK UP WITH HIM		1 2 3	SC SC ST LU TA SA CR FL	CUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN KE YOUR TIME M HUNT CUISE
14 15 16 17	4 12 14 15	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES GREATEST HITS SO FAR ZAC BROWN BAND IGNITE THE NIGHT	1 1 1	15 16	16 23 19	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION NOTHIN' LIKE YOU		1 2 3 4 5	SC ST LU TA SA CR FL	CUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN KE YOUR TIME M HUNT CUISE ORIDA GEORGIA LINE RL CRUSH
14 15 16 17	4 12 14 15 16	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES GREATEST HITS SO FAR ZAC BROWN BAND IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE DJANGO AND JIMMIE	1 1 1	15 16 17 18	16 23 19	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY REAL LIFE		1 2 3 4 5	SC SC ST LU TA SA CR FL GII LIT	CUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN KE YOUR TIME M HUNT CUISE ORIDA GEORGIA LINE RL CRUSH TILE BIG TOWN TRENDING COUNTRY/
14 15 16 17 18 19	4 12 14 15 16	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES GREATEST HITS SO FAR ZAC BROWN BAND IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE	1 1 1 2	15 16 17 18	16 23 19 17 18	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY REAL LIFE JAKE OWEN LONG STRETCH OF LOVE		1 2 3 4 5 TO AN	SC SC ST LU TASA SA CR FL LIT P 5 / ER	CUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN KE YOUR TIME M HUNT CUISE ORIDA GEORGIA LINE RL CRUSH TILE BIG TOWN TRENDING COUNTRY/ ICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS*
14 15 16 17 18 19	4 12 14 15 16 18 19	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES GREATEST HITS SO FAR ZAC BROWN BAND IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON COLE SWINDELL	1 1 1 2 2	115 116 117 118 119 120	16 23 19 17 18	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY REAL LIFE JAKE OWEN LONG STRETCH OF LOVE LADY ANTEBELLUM I'M TO BLAME		1 2 3 4 5 TO AN	SC SC ST LU TA SA CR FL GIII P 5 ITILI WI KIII	CUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN KE YOUR TIME M HUNT CUISE ORIDA GEORGIA LINE RL CRUSH TTLE BIG TOWN TRENDING COUNTRY/ ICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS* E/ARTIST LD ONES P MOORE
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	4 12 14 15 16 18 19	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES GREATEST HITS SO FAR ZAC BROWN BAND IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL THE BIG REVIVAL	1 1 2 2 2	15 16 17 18 19 19	16 23 19 17 18 20	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY REAL LIFE JAKE OWEN LONG STRETCH OF LOVE LADY ANTEBELLUM I'M TO BLAME KIP MOORE GONNA		1 2 3 4 5 TO AN TW 1	SC SC ST LU TA SA CR FL GIILIT P 5 ITTL WI KIII REE TA	CUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN KE YOUR TIME M HUNT CUISE ORIDA GEORGIA LINE RL CRUSH TTLE BIG TOWN TRENDING COUNTRY/ ICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS* E/ARTIST LD ONES P MOORE
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	4 12 14 15 16 18 19 23	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES GREATEST HITS SO FAR ZAC BROWN BAND IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL THE BIG REVIVAL KENNY CHESNEY GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1	1 1 2 2 2 2	15 16 17 18 19 19	16 23 19 17 18 20 21 26	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY REAL LIFE JAKE OWEN LONG STRETCH OF LOVE LADY ANTEBELLUM I'M TO BLAME KIP MOORE GONNA BLAKE SHELTON BURNING HOUSE		1 2 3 4 5 TO AN TW 1 2	SC SC ST LU TA SA CR FL GIIILIT P 5 NER KIII KIII REE TA HC	CUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN KE YOUR TIME M HUNT CUISE ORIDA GEORGIA LINE RI CRUSH TILE BIG TOWN TRENDING COUNTRY/ ICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS* E/ARTIST LD ONES D MOORE CYLOR SWIFT JEAK NOW
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25	4 12 14 15 16 18 19 23 21 25 20 24	MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY MICHAEL RAY CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN PAGEANT MATERIAL KACEY MUSGRAVES GREATEST HITS SO FAR ZAC BROWN BAND IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE DJANGO AND JIMMIE WILLIE NELSON & MERLE HAGGARD BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL THE BIG REVIVAL KENNY CHESNEY GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD 35 BIGGEST HITS	1 1 1 2 2 2 2 2	15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 22	16 23 19 17 18 20 21 26 22	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE LET ME SEE YA GIRL COLE SWINDELL STRIP IT DOWN LUKE BRYAN BREAK UP WITH HIM OLD DOMINION NOTHIN' LIKE YOU DAN + SHAY REAL LIFE JAKE OWEN LONG STRETCH OF LOVE LADY ANTEBELLUM I'M TO BLAME KIP MOORE GONNA BLAKE SHELTON BURNING HOUSE CAM SMOKE BREAK		1 2 3 4 5 TO AN 1 2 3 4 5	SC SC ST LU TA SA CR FL LITTLE WI KIII REE TA AN FL	CUTHERN BELLE OTTY McCREERY RIP IT DOWN KE BRYAN KE YOUR TIME M HUNT PUISE ORIDA GEORGIA LINE RL CRUSH TTLE BIG TOWN TRENDING COUNTRY/ ICANA/SOUTHERN ALBUMS* E/ARTIST LD ONES P MOORE DYLOR SWIFT PEAK NOW YLOR SWIFT DME











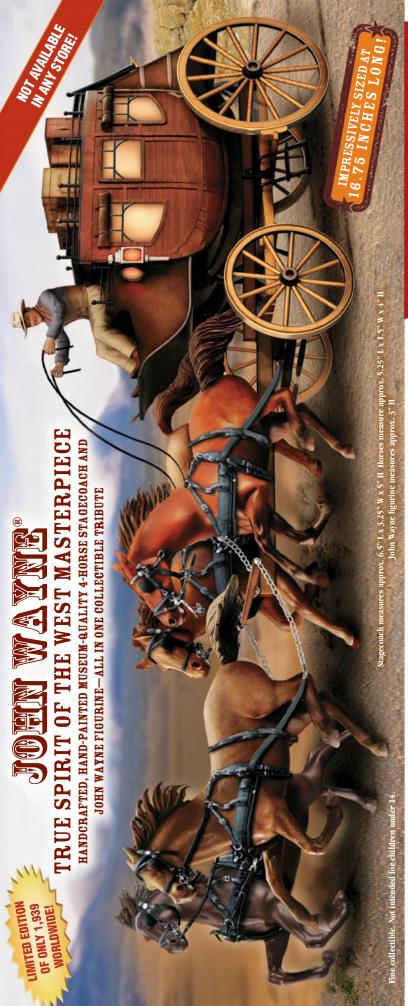






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Compiled by John Reiman

HUNTER HAYES

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DANN HUFF
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SPEAK NOW WORLD TOUR
STORM WARNING

TATTOO
TATTOO (YOUR NAME)
TOUR
TEEN CHOICE AWARDS
THAW OUT TOUR
TWENTY-ONE
VICTORIA JUSTICE
WANTED
WE'RE NOT INVISIBLE TOUR

WHEELS UP TOUR



Find the words, titles and phrases in this wordsearch challenge submitted by SARA BROWN of Paragould, Ark. NOTE—they may appear vertically, horizontally, diagonally, backward or forward. Good luck!

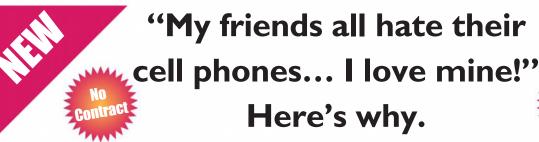
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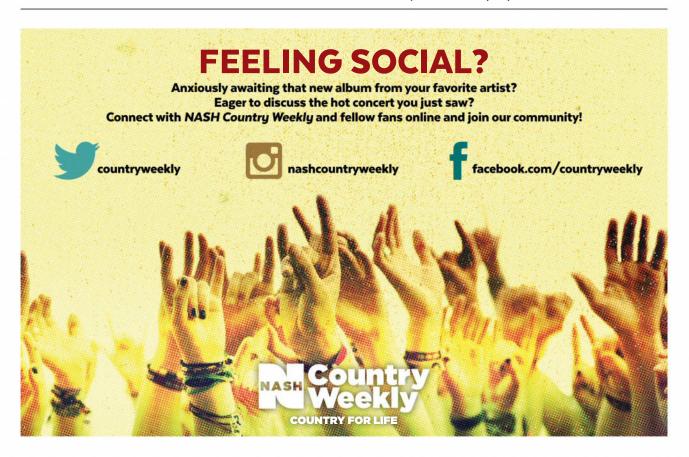
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"I was on a dance team for a year of college. Even when I moved to Nashville, I had to put dance on the back burner because I was learning how to write songs and play guitar, but I would go to Vanderbilt [University] and I was in so many drop-in classes that they thought I was a student there and they asked me to be part of their hip-hop production one year. And I was like, 'Yep, I will,' and I was."

CLARE DUNN

Deer John

Famous "Johns" left out of Keith Urban's "John Cougar, John Deere,



John 3:16": John
Candy, John
Belushi, John
Denver, John
Goodman, John
Elway, John F.
Kennedy, John
Lennon, John
Madden, JOHN
STAMOS, John
Travolta.



STATES OF THE UNION

BRETT ELDREDGE's new album, *Illinois*, is named after his home state, but he's not the first artist to give props to the U.S. of A. with an album title.



Nebraska Bruce Springsteen



lowa Slipknot



Ohio
Over the
Rhine



New Jersey Bon Jovi



Tejas **ZZ Top**

MINE FIELD

Coal mining was the central occupation of four of our 40 Labor Day songs, including "16 Tons," "Coal Miner's Daughter," "Working in a Coal Mine" and "Call the Captain." In addition, the laborintensive job is mentioned in "40

Hour Week."



"I never try to go with a trend, I chased that back in the '90s a little bit and it didn't work. I just go with the best songs I can find, and when I went in to do this album [Love Somebody], I wasn't chasing anything, I wasn't trying to make it resemble anything, I wasn't going with any trends. I wanted to find the best possible 12 songs I could find, ones that touched my heart. Because they touch my heart and spark some kind of emotion, when you hear it, hopefully it will do the same. If it doesn't, I picked the wrong songs."



REBA McENTIRE

Billboard

Between the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs chart and the *Billboard* Country Airplay Chart, these artists currently have a streak of consecutive No. 1s:

15 Blake Shelton

10 Luke Bryan

8 Florida Georgia Line

Jason Aldean

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